

Message Text

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63

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1096

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2718

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJECT: FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF DAVID FLAZAR DIES

REF: 75 TEL AVIV 8038

1. FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF DAVID (DADO) ELAZAR, PRESENTLY CHAIRMAN OF THE ZIM SHIPPING COMPANY, DIED UNEXPECTEDLY ON APRIL 15 AT THE AGE OF 51 OF A HEART ATTACK. THE FUNERAL WITH FULL MILITARY HONORS WILL TAKE PLACE IN JERUSALEM ON APRIL 18 WITH THE ACTING DATT REPRESENTING THE EMBASSY.

2. ELAZAR'S DEATH HAS AGAIN OPENED UP PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON THE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FAILURES PRCEDING AND DURING THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE AGRANAT COMMISSION, WHICH HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AFTER THE WAR TO INQUIRE INTO THESE ISSUES, HAS EXONERATED PRIME MINISTER MEIR AND DEFENSE MINISTER DAYAN WHILE FINDING ELAZAR AND OTHER TOP IDF COMMANDERS AT FAULT. PUBLICATION OF THE AGRANAT COMMISSION'S INITIAL REPORT IN APRIL, 1974 FORCED ELAZAR'S RESIGNATION, AND IN THE SUBSEQUENT UPROAR OVER THE APPARENT WHITEWASH OF DAYAN, THE LAST MEIR GOVERNMENT FELL. AFTER PUBLICATION OF THE FULL AGRANANT REPORT IN JANUARY, 1975, ELAZAR SUBMITTED A DETAILED MEMORANDUM TO THE CABINET FIVE MONTHS LATER DENYING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE IDF'S FAILINGS AND

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EMPHAYIZING HIS VIEW THAT DAYAN SHOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN HELD

ACCOUNTABLE FOR WHAT WENT WRONG.

3. SINCE HIS RESIGNATION AS COS, ELAZAR HAS BEEN SEEKING TO REHABILITATE HIS REPUTATION AND AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH WAS WRITING A BOOK REVIEWING HIS ARMY CAREER INCLUDING HIS ROLE IN THE OCTOBER WAR. AS EDITORIALS AND TRIBUTES FROM PUBLIC OFFICIALS INDICATE, MANY ISRAELIS RETROSPECTIVELY BELIEVE THAT ELAZAR HAD BEEN DEALT OVERLY HARSH TREATMENT BY THE AGRANAT COMMISSION AND THEY NOW HIGHLIGHT HIS STRONG COMMAND PERFORMANCE DURING THE WAR.

4. IT WILL ALSO BE RECALLED THAT THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION IN DECEMBER 1975 THAT RABIN WAS CONSIDERING THE REPLACEMENT OF DINITZ WITH ELAZAR. ALTHOUGH THE GOI OFFICIALLY DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY SUBSTANCE TO THESE REPORTS, MFA DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON HAD TOLD US THAT RABIN WAS INDEED CONSIDERING REPLACING DINITZ SOMETIME IN 1976. MOST LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVED THAT RABIN WOULD WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE U.S. ELECTIONS TO MAKE A CHANGE. RABIN AND ELAZAR HAD BEEN CLOSE FRIENDS AND PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES AND IT SEEMED PLAUSIBLE THAT HE WAS BEING CONSIDERED AS DINITZ'S REPLACEMENT. IF THIS SPECULATION HAD ANY VALIDITY, THE QUESTION OF WHOM RABIN MAY BE CONSIDERING AS THE NEXT AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON IS NOW AGAIN OPEN.
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